

Wherever and whenever you need us.

Since its inception in 1837, Hillside has built its reputation as being a place for children and families to find help and support. Over the years as the number of families we serve has grown, so has the variety and nature of their challenges. And with that has come the need for a new way of thinking about the solutions we provide to help our families to be successful.

Recognizing the realities our families face in dealing with crises, we have worked to bring Hillside services to our families where and when they need them the most.

Today, our Integration Center is a 24/7 triage phone center providing Hillside staff to answer any parent's or child's call for help. Our newly revamped Web site is another source of information and support accessible any time and from anywhere via the Internet. Rural offices provide children and families with face-to-face access to Hillside staff in their own hometowns and villages, and community partnerships with school districts put our staff members in middle and high schools for personal, on-the-scene support for the at-risk students who need them.

As our services and the means for access to those services have changed, our staff has also grown so that Hillside can be there for its families . . . wherever and whenever they need us.

For four of our staff members and their 2,275 colleagues at Hillside Family of Agencies, *believing is being there.*

“ . . . it can be downright overwhelming when you stop and consider the thousands of people who have made contact with Hillside and received the help they need because of our Web site.”



Dan—Believing for 10 years

Since it first launched, our Web site has been a cornerstone of our effort to make Hillside accessible to anyone, anywhere, and at any time. We saw this as early as 1999 with the email groups we set up for foster parents. People from all over our service area, including those who would never have made it in to attend live meetings, were able to post problems, ask questions, and participate in discussion groups.

Some of our success stories are small but very touching. One man on the West Coast knew his father had spent time as a resident at Hillside. He looked in the site's history section and found a photo of his father there; to this day, it's the only picture of his father that he's ever had.

Now, we have just launched a brand new site, which is more robust and interactive than ever. Instead of requiring people to come to a Hillside location for training, the new site will offer online courses. We'll have specialized training for minority parents and foster parents, general parenting courses, and much more—all which will be accessible during the day, or at 2:00 in the morning at your kitchen table!

We still have lots to do, but it can be downright overwhelming when you stop and consider the thousands of people who have made contact with Hillside and received the help they need because of our Web site.

The job I do and the people it helps make me proud and excited to come into work each morning.

DAN ROACH
Hillside Webmaster

Mildred—Believing for 4 years

Our Integration Center is here to take phone calls from parents or children night and day, seven days a week. Sometimes it's a fairly simple matter—like a mom or dad asking what program might be a good match for their child's needs.

But other times, the situation can be far more urgent.

I was here one Sunday working as a translator (I'm English-Spanish bilingual), and we were handling routine questions and requests. Then, a very different call came in. A 12-year-old girl had taken pills in an apparent suicide attempt. Now she was terrified, near-hysterical, and calling us for help.

We instantly called 911 and got the police and ambulance on the way to the home. Then we stayed on the line with the girl, calming her, and comforting her until help arrived. She was rushed to the hospital just in time and her life was saved. To me, this was an amazing thing to be a part of.

In the Integration Center, we're the first voice people hear when they're in need and call for help. I find this to be both a tremendous responsibility and a great privilege.

MILDRED MELENDEZ
Hillside Integration Center



“We're the first voice people hear when they're in need and call for help.”



“With dedicated offices in Warsaw and many other small towns, we've become an integral part of these rural communities.”

Vicky—Believing for 14 years

Before our rural offices were established, when people heard the name “Hillside” they thought “Rochester.” And to most families out here, that meant “inaccessible.” Of course, therapists and other professionals from Hillside would visit Warsaw and other small communities—but that was only periodically, and I think that they may have been perceived, to some degree, as outsiders.

Now, with dedicated offices in Warsaw and many other small towns, we've become an integral part of these rural communities. We really get to know the families here, and when we work with them we try hard to understand the situation from their point of view. Consequently, we've had parents tell us “this is the first time we feel like anyone has really listened to us.” This makes a wonderful foundation for building a trusting and productive relationship—it leads to families becoming empowered and participating in developing their own solutions.

On a day-to-day basis, we gather referrals from many sources, interview children and families, then coordinate the right mix of support services. To accomplish this, we often need to collaborate with other healthcare professionals with whom we've developed very close working relationships.

We're also very close within our own team. We've all taken our mission to heart, and it's bound us together like a family: we support each other, we're very direct with each other, and we have fun with each other. It's a great job in a great organization.

VICKY SANTINI
Warsaw Office Team Leader

Eric—Believing for 7 years

There's a common misconception that young people today don't want to work hard enough to succeed—but nothing could be further from the truth. What they need is an adult to help them navigate the complications of school, jobs, and life itself.

I saw this in my very first position with Hillside as a part-time driver, transporting kids in the program to their jobs. We got along real well, and after a while the kids started asking me for advice: how to deal with their bosses, how to respond to difficult customers—that sort of thing. They seemed to respect my opinion, and I found it gratifying to help them out.

This led to Hillside offering me a position as a youth advocate. I now work out of the Wilson Foundation and have about 33 kids in grades 7–9 assigned to me. Being with the kids in their school environment is essential to understanding firsthand the challenges they face. I go to their classes and observe, to gauge how they're doing. Then I meet with them one-on-one to discuss academics, life outside of school—whatever's on their minds. I give them lots of support, but I also really stay on them about keeping their grades up.

We've had so many success stories. One young man with learning challenges wanted to be a nurse. He worked hard in the program and is now in a four-year college pursuing his goal. One young lady went from dribbling a basketball down the hallways to graduating and landing a great job at the University of Rochester Medical Center.

In many ways, these kids see their advocates as surrogate parents. That's an honor—and carries with it a responsibility I do my best to live up to every day.

ERIC MAYO
Youth Advocate



“Being with the kids in their school environment is essential to understanding first-hand the challenges they face.”